

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' *James Connolly*

Sean-a-Scuab

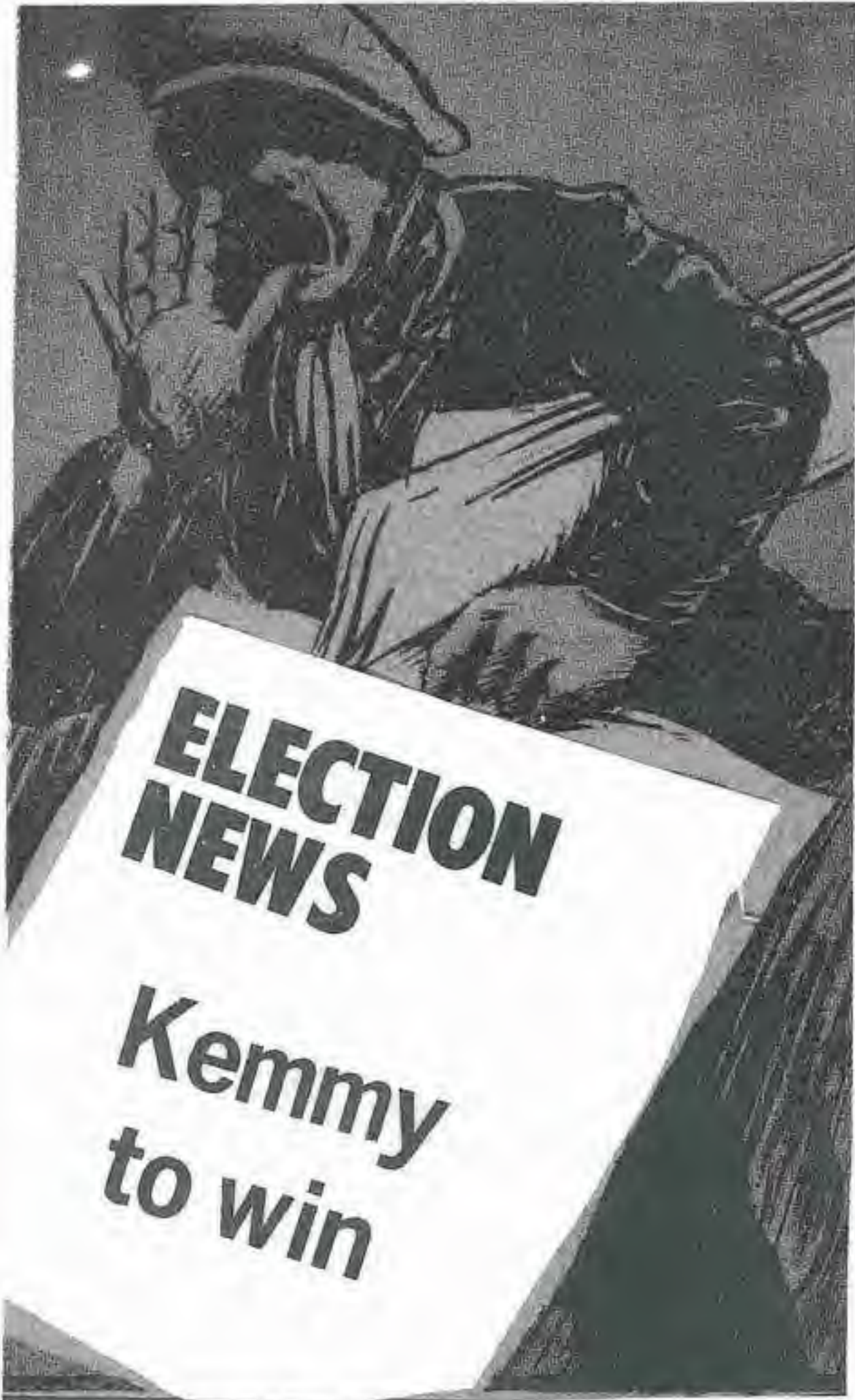


DESMOND O'GRADY

Nothing is lost,
save honour



GENERAL ELECTION



NOTHING IS LOST, SAVE HONOUR

BY DERMOT MCBYD

REMEMBER the 1969 General Election and Steve Coughlan begging for votes on the ground that he was short only of a few months' service as a Dail Deputy to qualify for a pension? After ten years' service, in his case attendance, at Leinster House he would, you were told, qualify for 10/40ths, i.e. one-fourth, of a T.D.'s pay as pension and wouldn't it be a crying shame to deprive the Coughlan family of this winning bonus for the sake of a few months. A curious basis on which to solicit votes? Not really; not when you consider that T.D.'s widows and children regularly seek votes — and get elected — on the same whine. The Limerick electorate, heedless of its own interests, duly came to the rescue of Steve Coughlan. The rest is silence.

There is no such sumpathy factor this time round; failure to re-elect Steve Coughlan will benefit him to the tune of an immediate pension of about £59 a week. It will not, of course, stop at that for like other T.D.'s, Ministers, and Civil Servants, Steve's pension is inflation-proofed by being index-linked. This linking gives the Coughlan family and the other privileged people you employ a defence against rising prices not available to the rest of the working population. In this regard, equity could be restored, at a stroke, by linking such pensions not to the retail price index, as at present, but to the index of average earnings. This would have the effect of bringing public servants and bookmaker-T.D.'s into line with the rest of us, making them neither any better nor any worse off than the average wage-earner. Is this likely to happen? Well, ask yourself how often you've heard any of the Limerick T.D.'s thank you for this feather-bedding: it is as likely as that they will in the future.

Of course, this handsome pension, entirely unearned, is not all you will have to bear in mind when Coughlan comes cap and satchel in hand at the next election. His service, bless the mark!, to Limerick as a Dail Deputy is noted in the bound volumes of the Debates as consisting entirely of a few uncouth interjections; his private surgeries you will know yourself have been devoted entirely to the manipulation of a few minor jobs, including one or two in the Limerick General Post Office. He has served no Dail Committee, advanced no educational, social or cultural interest. Indeed, how could he? He is a thick and, if you vote for him, you're another.

One reason, if that's the word, for voting for Coughlan is that his re-election would almost certainly ensure a Senate place, salary and pension for son Thady who'd then be heir-presumptive to the Dail seat. After Thady's flop as Mayor you know where that'll land you . . . "After the Lord Mayor's Show, comes the . . ." Limerick with its proud history can readily pick as its representative someone other than a mindless, mostly speechless racist. Remember when you come to vote the words Jay Gould, American financier of the 1860's, as he fled from his Erie Railroad offices pursued by a mob of angry shareholders, cried reassuringly over his shoulder to a few, simple, trusting loyalists: "Nothing is lost, save honour"

HONOUR, did I say? Let's be flippant for a moment and consider the old Question and Answer: Question: When a man of honour takes a maiden's honour from her what should he do? Answer (obvious): Put her honour back again! Poor, but I needed a break here from all those Coughlans, Herbert-Scherberts, O'Donnell-A-Boos and Zinky Fingers O'Malley, the whole stinking crew.

One must not, however, call the electorate sheep or one

might get one's comeuppance as a certain General Liam Deasy did in an immediate post-Civil War election in Waterford. The cry of his opponents, the W.T. Cosgrave-ites, was that the Anglo-Irish Treaty represented the will of the people and should be respected. Deasy brushed all that aside and told a pre-election rally: "They talk of the will of the people, but the people are only a flock of sheep to be led and driven at will". They cheered, how they cheered!, but on the way home they must have come to the conclusion that perhaps they were the people Deasy had in mind. At any rate, they did not elect the General. We must, therefore, take care always to behave like gentlemen and gentlemen in my experience are never unintentionally offensive.

HOW DELICATELY, how like Agag one must walk in the minefield of Irish politics. You'd think it safe all the same to have a swipe at Cromwell so long the foremost figure in Irish demonology. And you'd be wrong, for this Chief of Men has his defenders among us. In a recent Dublin debate Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien made an off-the-cuff point at the expense of Cromwell and was promptly (and rightly) taken to task by an alert correspondent in the *Irish Times*. Cromwell, he pointed out, rejoiced that as Protector he was able to "hinder Parliaments from imposing what religions they will on the consciences of men" which, until this lapse, was largely the O'Brien canon; moreover, Cromwell offered the Pope a guarantee (which he refused) that he would allow worship by Catholics if the Pope stopped preaching rebellion against the English Government.

The correspondent, Manus O'Riordan, also made the telling point: "Which Republican tradition should we view with greater horror — that of Cromwell who secured the right of the Jews to return to England after a ban of three-and-a-half centuries, or that of Dr. O'Brien's Cabinet colleague, Oliver J. Flanagan, who on July 9, 1943, called upon Dail Eireann to follow the example of Nazi Germany and rout the Jews out of Ireland?". (Here let us not forget that it was a Redemptorist priest in Limerick who called for sanctions against the handful of Jews in Limerick at the turn of the century, that the same disgusting — and sinful — sentiments were mouthed not so long ago by Steve Coughlan, T.D.). Good on you, Manus O'Riordan, though I can't see you winning many supporters in, say, Drogheda.

It is not the Jews, but their baiters, clerical and lay, who would stifle freedom of conscience today. Let me leave the final riposte to an old *Daily Herald* friend of mine, W.N. ('Trilby') Ewer, who died last month. It is in all the anthologies: "How odd/Of God/To choose/The Jews". And the not-so-well-known addendum whose authorship escapes me: "Not half so odd/As those/Who choose/A Jewish God/Yet spurn the Jews".

ON MY way to Limerick recently I was soured by two items: A Dublin cafe's fascia that boasted "freshly-cut sandwiches" and a giant poster in colour at Heuston station advertising the "Ballybunion Batchelor Competition". Still, as long as they're not Gay Bachelors or bachelors gay I must not worry excessively: it could be executive speling!

While waiting for Jim Kemmy to emerge from a meeting of the National Monuments Advisory Committee I noted that rabbits (skinned) were 60p, a 50 per cent rise since I first saw them in the Fianna Fail Councillor's shop. Inflation, I suppose,

yet a rival in trade was offering them complete with fur at the same price. I noted too that many of the adverts in the *Leader* were for ladies of one sort or another: Lady Assistant, Young Lady to Help . . . and so on. Jaysus, are there no ordinary women in Limerick, are they all ladies of title down on their luck? Such pretentiousness, but worthy of the breed of the craven crew of my boyhood days who went all hoity-toity about any lad who had ideas "above his station". Oh! Limerick put the boot in so on for yourselves and for me!

I HAD hoped to sample some cultural activity with Jim Kemmy. I did. I visited a few bars, all crowded; that's the only culture Limerick has to offer native son and visitor. No drama, no music, no ballet, no youth centres. What a prospect for the boys and girls of Limerick! Yet Mungret College building and grounds are still untenanted and surely provide an opportunity for the Jesuit Fathers to hand it over as a centre for the young people condemned to socialise in pubs. How that Father-General of the Jesuits, Pedro Aarupe, would be heartened if the Irish Province of the Society let the old College at a nominal rent to the city that financed it for so long! The College as a youth centre must surely reduce delinquency and vandalism. Here's a chance for the Redemptorist priest who threatens to picket Paddy Cooney, Minister for Justice, to do something positive; he could have a word with the Jesuits about the College; his successful intervention could save the price of several new Daingean.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL Declan Costello is about to update the law on nullity, the civil law that is, and he promises that his new nullity document will not seek to impose the views of any religious group. Well, I'll believe that when I see it. Meanwhile, the Church has given no indication that it will abide by any law. On the contrary, The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Dermot Ryan, cocked a snook or, if you prefer, a crozier, at the law of the land by granting his own brand of nullity to Dublin businessman Julian Vard permitting him to go through a marriage ceremony in a Dublin church with his young housekeeper in spite of protests at the Pro-Cathedral by his legally-married wife and mother of their four children. According to the Church, the Vards' first marriage never took place and, inferentially, the children are not, in the eyes of the Church, legitimate. Will Mr. Costello tell the Archbishop he is wrong, that he will not tolerate this imposing of "the views of any religious group"? Somehow I doubt it. Home Rule is Rome Rule . . . and don't you forget it! Mr. Costello can continue to talk about The Just Society, but it will be just talk and not likely to convince Southern Catholics, let alone Dr. Paisley's supporters.

As regards the refusal by Dr. Philbin, Bishop of Down and Connor, to Confirm Catholic children in Bangor who attend a non-denominational school and to which we drew attention last month, you doubtless saw the four bishops being asked about it on The Late Late Show. All they said was that they had not heard Dr. Philbin's view. Indeed, neither has the mother (of two boys) who appeared on the Show. And for why? For the simple reason that, as the distressed mother explained, Dr. Philbin has refused to discuss it with the mothers. Nice one, Philbin!

These mothers should not worry all that much. My reason for saying so derives from the experience of a fine, portly parish priest I used to know in Kilmaley, County Clare, a Father Courtney. Well, Fr. Courtney, an ultra-conscientious sagart, was taking his bishop, the late Dr. Michael Fogarty (subsequently Archbishop) to Confirm the boys of his parish when on a quiet stretch of road he pulled up the outside car he was driving to unburden himself. "My Lord, he said, "there's something's been troubling me all my life; I never remember having been Confirmed. Will you Confirm me now?" Dr. Fogarty, I was told, transfixed him with an eye and said with deliberation, "Do you remember having been baptised? Drive

on, y'ould fool". It could be that those Bangor boys will carry Confirmation in their hearts, that the slap in the face their mothers are getting from Dr. Philbin will be sacrament enough.

SHOP AROUND when you can; it pays. Last month I decided to take my ever-loving to London for a short break. Cheese-eaters will learn with envy that best English Stilton, which costs £2 a lb. in my nearest Dublin supermarket, can be bought for 96p in Kensington; steak dinners are up to £1 each cheaper and the vegetables don't come out of a tin; Guinness is 6p and 8p a pint cheaper; cigarettes, quite rightly, are dearer; American ice-cream parlors (they offer the real stuff in 32 flavours) proliferate, and as for kebab you can eat it all night if that's your scene. And if you're plagued with rheumatism or Portnoy's Complaints, why any newsagent's notice board will direct you to a masseuse and instant relief.

But there are not any jobs. The building trade, so favoured by the Irish, is kaput. Likewise nursing and teaching. Many thousands of girls with A-levels (roughly Leaving Cert. honours) who have done a three-year teacher-training course are unable even to get one-year practical teaching posts to enable them to register as teachers. And, if they don't get that one-year's practical work before five years are up, they have to start their three-year training all over again. School classes remain over-loaded, but more teachers, even if local councils could afford to employ them, would mean more school buildings . . . and there is positively no money for them.

That's the price Britain is paying for the International Monetary Fund loan that saved her from bankruptcy; her future, to which our own is so closely linked, seems already lost. In this crisis what are we doing for our school-leavers — present or future? We're opening embassies abroad, crying cockles and mussels in Brussels, listening to bishops and worrying about how we'll buy off Paddy Lane's greedy guts and that's it.

We are certainly doing nothing that will even half-cope with the population increase of 350,000 projected for the next decade. Nothing, of course, about Family Planning, though it is now at last being officially sponsored in Catholic Italy. It is, of course, a bit late there. Italy has 800,000, say that figure again! University students with no prospect whatever of getting posts in any capacity; 160,000 of these students are in the University of Rome alone and they're rioting in the streets; in Bologna, the future-less unemployed students would have wrecked the city but for the physical intervention of those dreadful trouble-makers, the Communists! It is then seriously suggested that the Steve Coughlans of this world have the mental equipment to handle the collapse that threatens here? If it is, you are as optimistic as Bord Failte in its latest campaign to attract British tourists while every hoarding in the land, and Dr. Newman, proclaims 'Brits Out!'

That's it. I must cultivate my garden. You, too, have some weeding to do, not forgetting to leave out a few of your TDs with the bruscar.

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**PART
27**

**BY
P.J. RYAN**

By the end of September the Staters had a tight hold on most of the larger towns in the country, while some villages endured the rigours of military rule capriciously enforced by the Diehards. A shopkeeper might be invited to a staff dinner by the local Brigadier and his ten-man brigade, and find himself eating the food taken from his own premises at gunpoint. He might have further hospitality pressed upon him and his ruffled feelings soothed with – 'Do have some more of this best Limerick bacon I can recommend it, the flavour is excellent!'

Recruits were being accepted into the army in increasing numbers. Many of those recruits felt that, while their sympathy with the ideals of the army was a splendid thing, their presence in the uniform of the army was better. Recruits could join at the nearest army post where their credentials would be examined and if accepted they would remain in that post for the duration of the Civil War. Those recruits would in turn assist in the examination of other recruits whose pretensions of loyalty to the State was suspect. Despite these precautions, treacherous infiltration into the army resulted in some posts being attacked and in their surrender without a shot being fired; when later captured, such infiltrators were tried and executed.

To sustain the interest of readers the modern historian must unfold a tale of love. Any Stater lured by love and venturing outside the town in which he was stationed was found shot dead next day. One such man survived six revolver bullet wounds, and related the details as an amusing comedy. 'Better to have loved and lost—'. Although the army grew in strength and popular esteem, the burnings, looting, ambushing and loss of life continued. Mitchelstown Castle and its contents, valued at two million pounds, went up in smoke. That beautiful piece of railway architecture, the railway viaduct at Mallow town, was blasted into rubble. On the third of October 1922, the Government issued a proclamation offering an amnesty and pardon to the enemies of the State if they would cease their hostile acts against the State. It was an all-embracing document, and, though written in legal jargon, it was almost tearful in its offer of mercy:

SAORSTAT EIREANN

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

1. Certain persons arrayed in arms against the State in an attempt to defeat by force the will of the people have created a state of armed rebellion and insurrection in the course of which the lives of citizens and soldiers of the State have been taken, their liberty violated, the vast quantities of public and private property plundered and destroyed.

2. The Government, with the sanction of Dail Eireann, has charged the National Forces with the task of suppressing the rebellion, of restoring peace and order and the rule of law, and of securing to the citizens full protection of life, liberty and property, and for the better carrying out of this task, the Government and Dail Eireann have sanctioned and approved the exercise by or under the authority of the Army Council of certain powers, including power to set up Military Courts, for enquiring into charges against persons alleged to have participated in the said rebellion and the acts aforesaid, and to inflict punishment in respect of such charges where proved.

3. The Government, however, knows that many such persons have been forced to participate in such actions against their will and better judgement, while others have come to realise that they have put their hands to the ruin of their motherland, and the Government, moved by the hope of restoring peace without further bloodshed and loss, has, therefore, decided that an opportunity be offered, even now, to those who are willing to throw in their lot with the majority

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

of their countrymen to withdraw from this rebellion with immunity to themselves.

KNOW THEN AND IT IS HEREBY ANNOUNCED AND PROCLAIMED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Every person who is engaged in such insurrection and rebellion against the State as aforesaid, or in such armed opposition to the National Forces as aforesaid, or who has been guilty of any offence against the State, directly arising out of such insurrection, rebellion, and armed opposition as aforesaid, and who on or before the 15th day of October, 1922, voluntarily delivers into the possession of the National Forces all firearms, arms, weapons, bombs, ammunition and explosives, and all public and private property, now unlawfully in his possession, and quits all lands or buildings unlawfully occupied by him, and who on or before the 15th day of October, 1922, voluntarily ceases to take part in, or aid or abet such insurrection, rebellion, or armed opposition, shall be permitted to return unmolested to his home, and to every such person we hereby, offer, assure, and proclaim a **FULL AMNESTY AND PARDON** for all such insurrection, riot, rebellion, armed opposition and offences as aforesaid.

2. Every such person may deliver any such firearms, arms, weapons, ammunition, explosives and bombs, and any such private and public property as aforesaid, to the Officer Commanding the nearest military position, or station, or to any such person as shall be nominated by him.

Published at Dublin this 3rd day of October 1922.

Signed on behalf of the Government of Saorstát Eireann

Liam T Mac Cosgair
President of Dail Eireann.

This offer of clemency by the Government was interpreted as an admission of weakness. The words "Military Courts and punishment" were assumed to be mere idle threats by a weakling Government unable to inflict punishments.

A devils orchestra of violence followed the publication of the offer of amnesty. Anyone with a gun and a grievance felt free to indulge his hate greed or malice. The Government waited a month and then by the authority of the Dail, military courts were set up. The only practical punishment which the Courts could inflict was the death penalty, as a sentence of a term in prison was meaningless to a man already in prison or internment.

In one town a sentry of the National Army was shot dead by a man dressed in the uniform of a Roman Catholic priest, the culprit was later captured and executed. In an attempted escape bid from prison, six Staters were shot dead with revolvers smuggled into the prison, those involved in the affair were tried by court martial and executed.

The execution of anyone found in possession of Arms commenced in November 1922 and continued until April 1923. A man could shoot several people in the presence of witnesses, but was not charged with murder; such a person was charged before a courtmartial with unlawful possession of arms, and if found guilty was executed. In this way questions of motive or intent did not arise. It was claimed that those persons before the courts had acted and were inspired by the purest and most patriotic of motives. This plea of patriotism may have been a consolation to the relatives of the hundreds of victims of their patriotic endeavours. Those patriots were given the opportunity of discussing the matter with the victims of their patriotic zeal. The firing squads implemented the verdicts of the courts martial and Dail Eireann.

(To be continued).

SEAN - A - SCUAB

BY DESMOND O'GRADY

When a child I associated my maternal grandfather, whom I never knew, with a story my uncle Feathereye told me of a Limerickman by the name of Shawn-a-Scoob. This was an old story also celebrated in verse by the Limerick poet Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond. The story has foundation in fact and the characters really lived and breathed the local fresh air, but after it got into the Bard's hands and he had done with it, his version became the one generally accepted by local storytellers.

It appears the City of Limerick was in crisis. The City Fathers had failed to elect a new Mayor. Session after session resulted in a deadlock. The Fathers could not settle on any one of themselves and no citizen would take on the responsibilities of so badgerable an office.

The crisis bulged as the deadlock held. Finally one worthy Father came up with a suggestion: the first man to cross Thomond Bridge — which led out of town to the county Clare and the western seaboard — at dawn on the following Saturday morning, whether he liked it or not, wanted, willed or wished it; would be appointed Mayor of the city. Everybody agreed that this was an astonishingly simple and acceptable solution and for the first time in a long time the weighty and wide-waisted City Fathers were of one mind.

There lived in those far off days a man who went by the nickname of Shawn-a-Scoob to all who knew or saluted him. He lived with his good wife in a wattle hut out in Cratloe Woods. His profession, if humble, was an honest one. He was a maker of brooms and brushes. All week long he toiled at cutting twigs and gathering heather, gorse and bushes which he bound to long and short wooden shafts — depending on whether he was making a broom or a brush. Early every Saturday morning — lark and linnet high in the sky, early curlew, rooking crow — he would carry strapped to his back, the week's brooms to the marketplace in Limerick city where he stood over them, his fists in his pockets, and he sold them for an honest price. This is why he was called Shawn-a-Scoob, or John of the Brooms, for *scoob* means broom or brush in the Gaelic.

And so it was Shawn was the first man to cross the river Shannon by way of Thomond Bridge that Saturday morning when the City Fathers were waiting on the alert.

Shawn was hardly the length of his big toe across the Bridge, innocently dreaming his way to market and thinking his early morning thoughts when he was accosted by the entire Council of City Fathers.

This was no small surprise for Shawn.

Before he could draw breath and give voice to his amazement — for he knew them well enough by the rich robes of office they wore — they informed him there and then, on that infamous but historical spot, that he was the first male human to cross Thomond Bridge that morning, and as such was therefore, as of this most solemn moment, Mayor of the City. All that remained was the official ceremony of swearing in the taking office. And this, they assured him, would be put into effect, carried out and dispatched forthwith and without further delay.

They transported him immediately, voiceless and bewildered, to their great, neoclassical granite Town Hall with its towering columns, formal facade, and carriage arcade. Once there, crowded into the regality of the robing room they vested him in the official robes of scarlet and ermine, hung the historic gold chain about his rough neck and shoved the symbolic silver mace into the palm of his country paw.

That night, in his befuddled honour, they held celebrations all over the town with lights and coloured bulbs, luminosities and brightly foreign fireworks. Meanwhile, in the offices the lesser clerical cast made arrangements for Shawn's Mayoral Parade through the streets of his city on the following morning, the Sabbath, before the entire population.

Back in Cratloe Woods, in his husbandman's wattle hut, Shawn's healthy and honourable wife began to wonder what in

the world had happened to Shawn that he had not shown his face home the Saturday night. She came to the crestfallen conclusion that he must have fallen foul of drinking company in the town and that they had got him so boneless drunk he could not make the road home. Or maybe he met a young thing, flighty and easy, who had turned his head and led him heedlessly astray against his awareness. He might well, even at this very mortal moment, be lying prone and punctured in pride and pocket in a common gutter of the town or somewhere in the ditch by the side of the open road under the indifferen moon.

So, Sunday morning, when Shawn didn't show, she threw her long black shawl about her shoulders and started down the road for Limerick.

When she reached and crossed Thomond Bridge, she found the entire populace abroad in the streets in festive mood and the town's entirety decorated like a dandy for a great parade.

And then the parade swung into sight,

There were marching soldiers and soldiers on jogging horseback all spit and polish, buckles, buttons and brass. There was a brass band with whirling drumsticks and stomping band major with moustaches. There was the easy stride of the high ecclesiastical orders about the plain purpose of their own purple and gold-embroidered authority, and in the middle of all, the centre and cause of attraction, rolled the delicately sprung, open, Mayoral Coach, drawn by snow white prancing horses with the Mayor himself, no less, seated within, smiling benignly and waving graciously to the cheering, flag waving people of his City.

The poor woman could hardly believe the two eyes in her head. There, regally enthroned in the upholstered amplitude of the Mayoral Carriage, a dazzling smile of surprised success and well-being as broad as a shark's on his porkchop, country-face, benignly waving, almost Papally blessing the delirious throng, rigged out in scarlet silk and ermine fur, with gold chain entangle and weighty mace in the crook of his arm, sat her one and only, larger than life, honest husband — Shawn-a-Scoob.

Certainly the sight gave her pause. But not for long. When reality reasserted itself, she moved. She rushed forward and out. Blind and senseless to all else about her, eyes wide and fixed on the image of himself before her, as in a trance or ecstatic transportation, she broke through the cheering throng calling "Shawn!, Shawn!"

Then she was at his side. One hand grasped at the french-polished carriagework, the other stretched forward in supplication.

"Shawn", she cried, "Don't you know me? Don't you know me at all?"

His attention caught by her shrill voice, his head turned a moment away from the applauding populace, his celebrating people. He looked down at her from his mayoral height. He looked deeply into her pleading eyes. His own eyes smoked. His brows arched. He raised his Mayoral hand as if in benediction and the scarlet stuff of his robe fell silkily back from his rough wrist. His features set gravely. His gaze had the penetration of some powerful prince of the Church.

"Shawn, Shawn. Don't you know me at all?" she cried again in her desperation.

"Get away home out of that woman", said Shawn grandly in one breath. "Can't you see I don't even know myself".

**GET THE
LIMERICK SOCIALIST
EVERY MONTH**

poems by Sean Healy

A HUMANIST'S PRAYER

I want to live,
to see the flowers' opening lips
drink in the Summer rain,
and not the frightened eyes of war-scared orphans
crazed with pain.

To see the golden moon
rise up above the distant hill,
a lover's moon, and not a bomber's
out to kill.

To hope that man shall follow man
as has happened since the race began,
and that the line continues endless
'til the end of time.

No God, or gods I ask for help,
let men appeal to men,
'give us this day our daily bread, not bombs',
Amen . . . Amen.

LAND OF THE SAVAGE

Land of toil and the slave's bent back,
heat that burns all humans black;
land of desert and scorching sun,
land of the whiplash and the gun;
land of murder, land of rape,
tortured from the Transvaal to the Cape;

where the poor and barefoot are trampled on,
and the black mother weeps for her murdered son;
land of the white man with his christian creed
blessing his murders and his greed,
his fascist politics of the devil's choice,
'every man has got his price';
land of brutes that ramp and ravage,
land of apartheid, and the white savage.

PAGAN FLAMES

Sometimes my angry thoughts rest,
and then I dream,
remembering the legendary Leprechaun,
seen by drunken liars by some mountain stream.
Oh, what a host of pagan fetishes still live
by cairn and mountain lake,
by holy wells like Glashachoorra,
and serving drinks at a poor man's wake;
for our ancient gods were always with us
although baptised with Christian names,
and the warm hearts that glow within us
are lit by pagan flames.
To the Christian man whose blood runs thin,
I've this to say,
our ancient ways were a healthy sin,
and the dogmas of the men of Rome
only confused our Celtic home.

KEMMY

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PART TWO

by SEAN BOURKE

DAINGEAN DAYS

THE FIRST NIGHT

Daingean Reformatory for boys in Offaly was justly known as the Alcatraz of Ireland. More so than any adult prison could ever be, for there is a limit to the amount of abuse that can be meted out to grown men even under the harshest of rules. But young boys of twelve and upwards have no way of hitting back at their tormentors, particularly when those tormentors are officially appointed and encouraged by the State.

I arrived at this inhuman institution on a cold dark Friday night in October 1947. I was just turned twelve years of age and had that morning been sentenced to three years by Justice Gleeson for the crime of stealing a bunch of bananas from the back seat of a motorcar.

The reception procedure was very informal. An elderly Brother with horn-rimmed glasses met us at the door. He invited my escorting policeman to go along to the parlour and told him that he would send along a meal and a pot of tea. The Brother then took me to a small office and made a note of my name and address. He allocated me the number 558 which for the next three years would be used mainly for stamping on my laundry. He then took me along to the kitchen where I was seated at a bare wooden table and given a mug of tea and a couple of slices of bread and butter and a plate of roast beef.

I should explain at this point that the kitchen in question was that which catered for the priests and brothers who ran Daingean Reformatory and not the kitchen which perpetrated the "meals" provided for the inmates. The boys' kitchen was referred to as the "cookhouse". This contrast was to be my first shock. And that plate of beef was to be the last meat I was to taste for a whole year.

Daingean Reformatory was (and still is today) run by a Roman Catholic order known as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. They are priests and lay brothers and their distinctive insignia is a crucifix attached to a black cord round the neck and then stuck at an angle into the waist belt of the cassock. Their headquarters and training college is at Inchicore in Dublin and they also send missionaries overseas to convert the natives to their own Oblate beliefs.

The Brother in charge of the kitchen was Brother Fitzpatrick and he came from County Clare. As I ate my meal off the bare working table I noticed that there were four other boys with white aprons working at various chores. One was washing-up at the sink and then handing the plates and pots to another boy at a nearby table to dry them. A third boy was scrubbing bigger pots out in the adjoining scullery. The fourth and oldest boy seemed to be in charge. The first three boys seemed to be about fourteen years of age and the boy in charge was probably sixteen. All wore short trousers under their white aprons and black, down-at-heel battered boots with torn grey stockings just barely clear of the uppers of the boots.

I was still wearing my dark blue Confirmation suit (also with short trousers) and, although a little the worse for wear, it made me look quite smart by comparison with the other boys who kept staring at me as they worked. At one stage, when Brother Fitzpatrick had left the kitchen for a moment to go to the refectory, the boy who was washing-up came across to me and whispered: "You'll be alright. You'll be working here in the kitchen with us and so you won't be on an outside job for the winter".

"How do you know that?" I asked, surprised.

"Because you're good looking", he replied, and went back to his washing-up.

Dormitory time was at eight o'clock and as I had arrived at seven I did not have long to wait to get away to bed. The other

boys took off their aprons to get ready to go. "These lads will show you the way to the dormitory", Brother Fitzpatrick told me. Then, after a very brief pause, he added: "You can work here in the kitchen with us - you'd like that wouldn't you?"

"I don't mind, sir", I replied.

"Good", he smiled. "You can come in with the others tomorrow morning".

The dormitory was the ground floor of the wing to the right of the main building. It had bare floorboards and small single iron beds along each wall about three feet apart. The green paint was peeling off the walls and from the ceiling hung bare forty-watt bulbs suspended on long lengths of worn flex.

"There is no talking allowed once you step inside the dormitory", one of the kitchen boys whispered to me. And the silence was very noticeable indeed, as a cassocked Brother paced up and down the centre aisle glowering at the occupant of each bed. This brother was called Brother Stack and he was from Kerry. He pointed to a bed about half-way down on the left hand side and told me it was mine.

"Thank you, sir", I said.

"There is no talking allowed in the dormitory!" he growled. "You won't be told again!"

I went down to the bed allocated to me and took off my jacket and shirt. I began to fumble with the fly buttons of my trousers and noticed the other boys all staring at me and grinning. Then the boy in the next bed (who turned out to be from the "Bombing Field" in Limerick) whispered: "You have to take your trousers off in bed".

"In bed?" I stared at him incredulously.

"Yes. Between the sheets". He glanced furtively on the dormitory to the far end where Brother Stack was just about to turn around for his return journey. "If you take them off standing there, you'll be flogged for impurity".

I climbed in between the dirty sheets and with considerable difficulty removed my trousers and placed them on the floor with my jacket and shirt. There were no lockers.

There was no library at Daingean but the boys were allowed to read any comics they might have till ten o'clock. Then half the lights were switched off and everybody was required to go to sleep and a civilian night-watchman took over from Brother Stack and continued the pacing and the vigilance for the rest of the night.

(To be continued).

HOMECOMING

In the dying light of an evening city
You came back to see
What had changed.

Small town city, small town minds,
Small town gossip, small town lies.

You found it all the same
Again you asked what was new,
Nothing here to comfort you.

Freaking out or going mad
No one now thought it sad
I had a son
And a telephone
Once again
You were alone.

Small town gossip, small town minds,
Small town memories, small town lives,
Where nothing happens,
Nothing new,
Nothing here,
To comfort you.

SUBVERSION AND THE IRISH

BY JOHN CASEY

Dermot McEvoy's 'subversive guard' and Sean Healy's poem with the line "while the want of millions is bread, and only bread" present a nice counterpoint with a rather heavy underlay of sad irony. The real question is why should a young guard blurt out: "Is that subversive?" when someone asks him if he reads the Limerick Socialist. This reaction indicates a frame of mind that predominates in the country. Indeed it is this exact mentality that has kept one or other of two conservative parties in power for sixty odd years and has allowed our thinking to be dominated by the Catholic hierarchy from Maynooth.

But the first question we must ask is: "Is our paper subversive?" And, as Dermot McEvoy said in answer in the March issue, in an odd way yes. The root meaning of the word subversion is to overthrow, and we wish to end a corrupt system where rancher farmers refuse to pay income tax while housewives try to scrape together money for meat and potatoes (at £1.20 a stone), where corrupt politicians cheat and deceive the electorate, where the educational system breeds sectarian murderers ready to kill a human being because of his religious beliefs. We have no interest in bombs or guns. We want to put bread on plates not coffins on a catafalque, and if our young guard means by subversive a gunman, he'd be at a loss at an editorial meeting of the Limerick Socialist; most of the members and supporters have never seen a gun not to mention using one. No, we want an end to poverty, to empty stomachs, to bad housing; we want to get people, to think, to realize that nationalism and the politics of the gun have brought nothing but misery, to assert their rights in planning their families, in shaping their own lives and their future, to cease slavishly following the dictates of reactionary bishops and opportunist politicians.

If formal schooling is regarded as education we must be one of the best educated nations amongst the smaller less-developed capitalist countries; unfortunately this does not seem to have washed into politics, where Civil War parties dominate the thinking and the voting of a majority.

We trade in ideas not in the conspiracies, the armed campaigns, the arms dumps and all the other ridiculous, puerile antics of republicans. (By the way, what is a Marxist - Republican - Sinn Feiner, a member of the Workers' Party? There is a doctoral thesis in that for some academic from Yale or Harvard). The Limerick Socialist and Jim Kemmy as a public representative continue to stimulate thought and discussion on a wide variety of matters. Notice we publish letters and articles critical of us and our ideas. Ever see a critical letter in any of the republican papers? They believe in democracy all the same: which knee would you like capped?

But maybe our garda is politically conscious and doesn't like new ideas. We have all been educated to distrust them: Jack Lynch believes socialism is an "alien ideology"; he probably doesn't remember William Thompson his fellow Corkman who had formulated early socialist ideas in 1826. But then Jack couldn't remember the Littlejohns who robbed the banks in Grafton Street.

Many people don't like Conor Cruise O'Brien because his ideas disturb the blanket of traditional truths. Who inculcated these traditional truths - the educators, lay and clerical. Who decided that we should have a canon of beliefs, who dictated the tome of traditional wisdom - our rulers, the monied establishment, the professorial hacks in the universities, the

Church leaders and the half-dozen political families who have ruled this State since its foundation. What are these beliefs? They have been watered down in the past few years but when I was a boy I was taught that we were a great Catholic country with a mission to convert Africa, Asia and all pagan mankind; that we were the Lord's anointed, holding the true faith and tickets to the land of harps and angels which for the most part was barred to all non-Catholics; that 1916 had established us as an independent republic, free from British tyranny which had enslaved us over the centuries; that the primary duty of a young patriot was to unite our country and by force of arms if necessary

This was the traditional bag of wisdom; it has got a bit of shaking in the past few years and people have discovered that there are holes in the bag; that it's threadbare in other places and rattles a little. It would, however, be a mistake to believe that the sacred truths are not treasured; that we're free from religious bigotry and that the murderous campaign of the Provisionals does not have the silent support of some men of property and some members of Fianna Fail. Bishop Philbin with Belfast red with sectarian murders, refuses to confirm children not attending a Catholic school.

We dislike thinkers, I won't mention, intellectuals - we've too many of them as it is! There is the distrust of independent thinking here, similar to what one finds in Spain, Portugal and the United States and it was to the Protestant countries that free-thinkers had to go to for freedom. Rousseau fled to Switzerland and Marx to England. A serious handicap for a would-be politician in rural Ireland in the past was a capacity to think for himself. If Jack McQuillan had been dull enough to be a party hack he could have had a seat indefinitely in the Dail.

Basically people have been traditionally distrustful of new parties and new ideas. We believed in Fianna Fail and Fine Gael and all their works and pomps. The Labour Party became respectable in 1969 with its influx of well-dressed, wealthy television personalities and university academics. However there is no doubt that the greatest enemies of progressive politics in Ireland have been the republicans with their bombs and guns, bloody revolutionary propaganda, mad campaigns of blood and destruction scattering hatred, division and confusion. And of course the enemies of progressive thinking have used them to stultify thought, as bogey men to scare off liberal-minded people and as an excuse to draw up a draconian code unrivalled in the Europe of today.

But all is not black. The republicans are on their last campaign; their atrocities, arrogance and fascism have disgusted the humane, the thinking and the decent. They have sickened all who are human beings. We stand neither with the fascists of the right nor with the groans of the republican left; we pursue progressive, pragmatic non-violent socialism.

We are here to stay; our support is growing amongst workers and progressive and thinking people. Neither the rantings or threats of the mad left, nor the ultra-right will stop or deflect us. And, who knows, Dermot McEvoy's "subversive" garda, if he does a bit of thinking for himself for a change, could yet be casting his postal vote for Limerick's Socialist candidate Councillor Jim Kemmy!

LITTLE MINDS

Great men boast not of their deeds
nor angels of their wings,
but little minds will always crow,
when right in trifling things.

SEAN HEALY